

POLICY ON DIGNITY AT WORK

Equality and Diversity

This Policy will be applied in a non-discriminatory way, irrespective of an employee's age, disability, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

Accessibility

If you require any document in an alternative format, for example, in larger print, please contact HR.

- 1 Goldsmiths is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated with dignity and respect when they are at Goldsmiths or any of its locations, or in any interactions with Goldsmiths' staff or representatives even if these are not on Goldsmiths' sites.
- 2 Everyone is expected to behave towards each other with proper civility and respect in any dealings, even when disagreeing on work or any other matters.
- 3 Organisations or teams tend to flourish and provide an atmosphere of teamwork and partnership when people are treated with respect and civility, understanding and clarity of intention. Where there is a lack of respect and civility, poor relationships and treatment of people in a manner that undermines dignity, teams tend to be unhappy and unproductive. It is not only those who are at the middle of the problem who are affected. Colleagues and others also become demoralised, distressed and unhappy too.

Good practice

- 4 There are many ways that we can all help to maintain and enhance working relationships built on respecting each other. We all spend a significant amount of our time at work and with other people – it's very important that we make this a positive experience.
- 5 Great relationships are built around really good and constant communication, whether the news is good or possibly upsetting. Team building exercises help teams to design agreed ways of delivering against targets and objectives and agreeing working practices that meet the team's needs.
- 6 Openness to feedback and acceptance of positive evaluation, as well as giving feedback are really important. If you know that there is no animosity or ulterior motive to constructive criticism, it is easier to move forward positively by seeking help and support. If you are closed to any criticism or evaluation and assume it is unwarranted, it is unlikely either you or the team will progress.

- 7 In the same way, if you have a problem with the way your manager or others are treating you it is best to deal with it as quickly as possible. In the majority of cases people do not set out deliberately to upset or distress others, or to bully or to harass. If that is the effect they are having, they may not realise that this is the result of their behaviour. If you can, you need to tell them. If for any reason, you can't talk to them or are too frightened to do so, it is all right to seek help from a friend, colleague, manager, or HR or other adviser. But the worst thing you can do is let it go on until it becomes a much bigger problem.
- 8 If you see it happening to others, it is all right to intervene and raise the matter. If you do so in good faith it is not a problem. But before you do it is worth just checking the facts in case you've misunderstood. Check with the person you think is being treated unfairly first that you've got the right picture and it's not just an impression.

Inappropriate behaviours

- 9 There is no place for behaviour that either makes individuals feel threatened or humiliated in public or in private. There is no place for treating anyone with less respect than others regardless of their job or relative position in the organisation either above or below you.
- 10 Inappropriate comments, gossip, rumour or judgements about anyone are damaging and not acceptable, whether this is about their work or personal life. Nor is inappropriate non-verbal behaviour, such as physically intimidating or threatening behaviour. They serve to undermine confidence and trust. We all disagree with others from time to time and we may not always enjoy each others' company. Indeed, there may even be severe disliking between individuals; but this is not a reason for treating anyone in a way that undermines their dignity. This is just as true of the junior member of staff who makes inappropriate comments about or makes threats to their managers either in public or in private to others, as it is of the supervisor or person in a position of management responsibility who misuses their position to undermine the dignity of junior staff.

Harassment and bullying: the legal framework

- 11 It is recognised that harassment and bullying may occur, and everyone needs to understand it is not acceptable and won't be tolerated. Goldsmiths has a legal duty to provide a safe working environment. This means an environment that is free from harassment and bullying and one where the dignity of staff is respected. All staff, students, contractors and others have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of themselves, colleagues, students and others by cooperating with Goldsmiths in its policies and procedures; in this case ensuring that they act in accordance with this Dignity At Work Policy.

Definitions

- 12 ***Harassment or Bullying*** is unwanted conduct that violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

- It is not limited to a person's sex, race, (including their colour, nationality or ethnic origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability or age.
- It may be persistent or an isolated incident.

13 **Unacceptable behaviour: some examples**

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone, particularly on the grounds of a person's sex, race, (including their colour, nationality or ethnic origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability or age.
- ridiculing or demeaning someone – picking on them or setting them up to fail.
- unwelcome sexual advances or behaviour – touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials.
- unwelcome comments or jokes of a sexual or racial nature.
- the use of obscene gestures or language.
- the offer of reward e.g. promotion or good grades for going along with sexual favours or threats for rejecting sexual favours.
- offering sexual favours in return for preferment.
- making threats or comments about someone's job security without good reason.
- exclusion or victimisation.
- threatening others with complaints or unfounded allegations against them to achieve preferment.

What's the difference between firm or robust management and bullying?

- 14 It is a manager's job to ensure that targets are met and work needs are fulfilled. They may need to set demanding objectives and may need to challenge or review performance below optimum levels. In doing so they will set demanding but fair and achievable targets appropriate to someone's job, grade and level of responsibility.

What happens if it seems the Policy has been breached?

- 15 This Policy has been designed to protect the well being of all members of the College. We expect staff to respect the intentions of the Policy and only to make complaints in good faith.
- 16 No one will suffer any detriment or be treated less favourably because they have made a genuine complaint.
- 17 But if a complaint is found to have been malicious, vexatious or frivolous this may be dealt with under the relevant disciplinary procedure.

Getting advice

- 18 Staff may seek advice from a Dignity at Work and Study Advisor at any stage who can provide confidential advice to those who believe they are being harassed or bullied or who have had allegations made against them. The role of the Dignity at Work and Study Advisors is to listen and provide advice on the options for resolving the matters. It is not their role to represent staff in any formal proceedings. Staff can also seek advice from the HR team members responsible for their department.

Outside contractors

- 19 In circumstances where an alleged bully/harasser is an outside contractor the situation should be reported to the immediate line manager who will then take the matter up with the Head of Department managing the contract (reporting the complaint to Human Resources as appropriate).

RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS

- 20 It is normally the best approach for all concerned to resolve complaints and issues informally where possible. Where it has not been possible to resolve complaints informally then staff should pursue their complaint under the grievance procedure which provides a framework for informal and formal methods of resolving problems.

Disciplinary Action

- 21 Serious cases of bullying or harassment will be treated as gross misconduct (which can lead to summary dismissal). Where the misconduct is less serious a lesser penalty may apply. Sometimes it will not be considered appropriate for the harasser/bully and the victim(s) to continue working in close proximity. In such cases every attempt will be made to relocate the harasser rather than the victim(s).

Appeals against complaint handling

- 22 If the complainant is not satisfied about the way their complaint has been handled, they may choose to follow the college's grievance procedure. Any appeal should be lodged within 2 weeks of receipt of the letter confirming the outcome of their complaint.
- 23 They may not appeal against the outcome of the complaint itself.

Malicious, frivolous or vexatious complaints

- 24 Making malicious, frivolous or vexatious allegations of harassment or bullying may be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter. Any complaints must be made in good faith, even though they may later be found not to be substantiated.
- 25 Nothing in this Policy will prevent members of staff from exercising their statutory rights.

Keeping in touch with what is going on in Goldsmiths: notifying incidents to Human Resources

- 26 We want to keep a record of all incidents of harassment and bullying, however minor they may seem. It makes it very much easier to track any patterns that are occurring and helps us to intervene to address problems before they become serious. Where there has been an incident this should be reported to Human Resources (in the case where a staff member is making the complaint and/or where there is a staff member complained of). The member of staff designated by the Registrar and Secretary will record incidents of student complaints and will keep Human Resources informed where complaints are about members of staff from students. Human Resources will keep the responsible officer informed where staff make complaints about students. Individual complainants have a right under the Data Protection Act to be informed that this information is being collected and to have any objections considered.
- 27 In addition Dignity at Work and Study Advisors record incidents and send anonymous statistics to Human Resources, and will be responsible for informing those making complaints that this is being done. This is not intended to breach the confidentiality of any discussion nor the staff member's right to choose not to take any further action, but a mechanism to ensure that incidents are recorded centrally.

Review and Monitoring of the Policy

This Policy will be reviewed from time to time in the light of any developments in employment legislation or good employee relations practice. If necessary, it will be revised in order to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness. The Policy will be monitored in line with statutory requirements and the College's equal opportunity action plans.

Approved by Council, 1 December 2009